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Initial Research into the Fragment/Fragmentation as a Key Concept of my Compositional Methodology

by

Joel Frederick Kirk

Submitted to the Department of Music, Humanities, and Media

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts

University of Huddersfield

September 2019

Word Count: 10,666
List of Submission Materials

- A Composition Portfolio consisting of scores for the following pieces:
  - *in-side* (2018) for quartertone flugelhorn and percussion – c. 11mins
    - **link to audio file:** https://soundcloud.com/user-138791393/in-side-201819-quartertone-flugelhorn-and-percussion
  - *Funèbres* (2019) for string quartet; this is a pair of pieces comprising of:
    - **Three Fantasies on a Theme by Harrison Birtwistle** (2019) – c. 12mins
      - I – *Rallonger* – c. 3-4mins
      - II – *Transfiguration* – c. 4mins
      - III – *Carrousel* – c. 4mins
    - **Expirer** (2019) – c. 4-5mins

- An accompanying thesis entitled “Initial Research into the Fragment as a Key Concept of my Compositional Methodology” (2019).
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Abstract

This thesis documents my writing of the pieces *in-side* (2018) for quartertone flugelhorn and percussion and *Funèbres* (2019) for string quartet through the lens of my research into the terms ‘fragment’ and ‘fragmentation’ as underlying concepts of my compositional methodology. I use this research to address the abstract issue of contextual background in my work alongside the practical issue of linking local-level gesture and large-scale form (part and whole) in my treatment of musical material. Using the notion that the fragment is a post-apocalyptic object which connotes the absence of a previously existing larger whole, discussion of context centres around the informed use of pre-existing musical fragments to create new wholes which pay homage to their past lives. Discussion of the dichotomy between micro- and macro- level organisation techniques moves towards a methodology in which large-scale form is not something that is superimposed on subsidiary materials, but something that is co-dependent to those materials; they arise from each-other and are integrally related. Musical works by Liza Lim, Rebecca Saunders, and Jürg Frey act as case studies alongside the artistic works of Cornelia Parker, Gehrard Richter, Tim Head, and Mann Ray.

Keywords: fragment; fragmentation; composition; recycling; death; afterlife
Acknowledgements

This portfolio and accompanying thesis mark the end of four years of study at the University of Huddersfield, four years I would not have gotten through without the incredible support of the staff and my fellow students. I would especially like to thank Professor Aaron Cassidy for three years of invaluable guidance and advice towards not only my future career as a composer, but also in academic life. I would additionally like to thank the composition community and CeReNeM for the opportunities to discuss my work and have it performed in a supportive setting that has allowed me to make leaps and bounds artistically. Finally, a huge thanks must go to my family and friends for all of their continued support with my work and personal life; such support is the reason that I am able to persevere through the highs and lows of pursuing a career in the arts. I cannot express my gratitude enough – thankyou.
Introduction: moving towards an artistic definition of the fragment/fragmentation

I first came to realise that fragmentation was a prominent theme of my work due to the comments of my peers and tutors. Words such as ‘fragments’, ‘pieces’, ‘containers’, ‘sectionalised’, were regularly used to describe the sonic qualities of my work. Figures 1 and 2 show score samples from my flute solo *reflection of light is either specular or diffuse* (2016-17) and my *Percussion Trio* (2016-17) respectively. In the flute solo excerpt, it is clear that each measure is a ‘container’ of material that is unique to that measure, with the bar lines marking abrupt changes from one style to another. The excerpt from *Percussion Trio* shows various rhythmic modules that are paired to specific instruments and juxtaposed over one another at different speeds across the ensemble. This creates a resultant haze of cross-rhythms through which the various repeated modules emerge and recede. In both cases here, the ‘fragments’ of material are either placed next to each other or juxtaposed on top of one another according to underlying processes.

In both *Percussion Trio* and *reflection of light*, directional large-scale form is superimposed on top of these local-level modular processes; *Percussion Trio* builds in texture via the addition of instruments and rhythms, lingers around the highest point of density, then gradually dies away again; *reflection of light* moves from a large range of the flute in the upper register to a narrow range in the lower and back again. Large-scale and local processes are not integrally linked and thus are easily discernible from one another – the clear directionality of the large-scale process make the experience of listening predictable, taking the focus away from the detail of the local-level gesture.

Up to this point, these two idioms of my work (modular treatment of material and superimposition of large-scale form) were entirely subconsciously enacted. I initially viewed their presence as negative and actively tried many times to avoid writing in this way. However, each time I tried, I ended up returning to them in some form or other. My goal in focusing on these ‘unwanted’ aspects of my work in my recent pieces has been to try to come to terms with them, understand them, and harness them as a conscious part of my methodology as a composer rather than allow them to remain a subconscious by-product of superficial processes. Across this thesis, I will aim to address the three key aims of my research using case studies of my work and the work of other composers/artists:
1. To come to a definition of the terms ‘fragment’ and ‘fragmentation’ through the lens of artistic practice.

2. To develop a compositional methodology that utilises fragments and fragmentation according to my researched definitions.

3. To hone the conscious use of the fragment in my work as a tool to create sophisticated works in which local gesture and large-scale form are considered mutually (i.e. neither one is subservient to the other).
Figure 1: author’s score excerpt from flute solo reflection of light is either specular or diffuse. Note the sudden changes of rhythmic subdivision, stylistic markings, dynamics, and articulations measure by measure creating an angular, jagged soundscape; a rhapsody of truncated containers, each one at odds with its counterparts.
Figure 2: author’s score excerpt from *Percussion Trio*. Parts two and three are moving at the same speed, with part one moving at a slightly quicker speed simultaneously. Each part has a cowbell, woodblock, and tom-tom indicated by three lines (top to bottom respectively). Like-rhythms across the parts are colour-coded to indicate how their displacement across different tempo levels and rhythmic subdivisions creates a fragile, delicately trembling fabric of rhythmic aggregates through which the various recurring rhythmic modules poke through.
To take its Oxford English Dictionary definition, a fragment may be defined as “a small part broken off or separated from something; an isolated or incomplete part of something”, with its verb counterpart (to fragment) being “to break or cause to break into fragments” (OED, 2019). It is clear that a key quality of a fragment is the absence of a larger object (or set of objects) which it has at some point been divorced from. In her paper “The fragment: elements of a definition” (2009, pp. 115-130), philosopher and art researcher Jacqueline Lichtenstein states that “…the fragment is defined in terms of both presence and absence. It is something in itself – a physical object, tangible and perceptible – but this object is also perceived as a sign, an index of something missing” (p. 120). Here, she highlights this paradoxical element of a fragment – that in order for an object to be defined as a fragment, it must simultaneously be present as an object in itself and yet connote the absence of another object(s).

Artist Cornelia Parker calls these signified entities “avoided objects” or “monuments” – ‘elephants in the room’ that all fragments carry with them (Parker, p. 93). Figures 3 and 4 show two works by Parker that highlight the ‘avoided object’ as a key element of her work. _Anti-Mass_ (1999) is a suspended structure built from the charred remains of an African American Baptist church destroyed by arson in the southern United States. The second, _Einstein’s Abstract_ (1999), is a photomicrograph of a blackboard covered with Einstein’s equations. In both cases, the ‘avoided object’ has been pulverised in some sense (i.e. squashed, burned, exploded, etc.), with its remains being fashioned into something new. In _Anti-Mass_, the charcoal has been suspended into a permeable, mobile shadow of its former structure. The magnifying of Einstein’s handiwork in _Einstein’s Abstract_ reveals the subtle delicacy and intricacy of what would have been overlooked as an untidy scrawl from afar; a scrawl loaded with the genius and intent of decades of study. Although agreeing with Lichtenstein that the fragment certainly connotes something missing, Parker finds that fragments, due to their lack of fixed identity, are the perfect raw materials for creating something new (p. 93). In both examples here, she artfully employs the fragments to create new, unique ‘monuments’ which simultaneously pay homage to the ‘avoided’ past lives of their constituents.
Figure 3: image of *Anti-Mass* (Parker, 1999; in Parker, p.97).

Figure 4: image of *Einstein’s Abstract* (Parker, 1999; in Parker, p. 108).
To take a Deleuzian stance on the fragment, it may be said that the fragment is in some way deterritorialized – it has followed a line of flight from the territory within/around/upon which it originally functioned and operated.¹ Thus, the fragment’s identity – its dynamic and kinetic functions (and limitations) in its original environment – is rendered obsolete. In this action, it becomes limitless, no longer bound by the constraints and expectations which constituted its prior knowledge of itself (its prior epistemological capacity has been surpassed).

From this research into the terms ‘fragment’ and ‘fragmentation,’ I have come find that the fragment is more than just a small piece of a larger object, and fragmentation is more than just the breaking of a larger object into smaller pieces. Considering the original definitions alongside the viewpoints of Lichtenstein and Parker, and Deleuze’s and Guattari’s notion of deterritorialization, I have narrowed my own definition of the fragment down to two key characteristics that all fragments seem to be imbued with, alongside an integrally related definition of ‘fragmentation’:

1. The fragment is an object in a state of identity crisis. It has been stripped of its defining qualities; it is rendered a symbol of implication rather than one of direct signification.

2. The fragment is a post-apocalyptic object. It implies a history of a ‘monumental object’ which has perished, and yet simultaneously is loaded with potential for the new.

¹ Deterritorialization is a term first posed by Deleuze and Guattari in their philosophical treatise A Thousand Plateaus (2018). At a basic level, it simply denotes the movement by which one leaves a territory (the territory not just being a physical area of land, but a way of life and one’s function in/contribution to that territory which affirms one’s knowing of what one ‘is’). One leaves the territory via a ‘line of flight’, with absolute deterritorialization being the case where one is able to completely leave the original territory and create a new territory (one completely reconstitutes one’s epistemological capacity of oneself). ‘Negative’ and ‘positive’ deterritorialization denote states of partial deterritorialization. With the negative, one flees the original territory only to reterritorialize oneself on a new territory (one’s epistemological capacity is briefly challenged but remains intact - the line of flight is obstructed). Positive denotes a deterritorialization from the original territory only to reterritorialize relative to the original (epistemological capacity is partially reconstituted – the line of flight is segmented). These forms of deterritorialization can confront, conform to, combine with, and remain distinct from each-other, with one always being in a simultaneous state of de- and re-territorialization in some form or other (if all lines are connected to all other lines in the rhizome, one flees oneself only to return to oneself in some form – one develops schizophrenically) (pp. 591-593).
3. Fragmentation is the death of the ‘monumental object’. It is the process by which the parts of the ‘monument’ become divorced from the whole; direct signification is rendered vague implication.

Regarding the link between local- and large-scale forms, DeLanda states that “wholes emerge in a bottom-up way, depending causally on their components, but they have a top-down influence on them” (2016, p. 21). He uses the example of an organisation or a community to illustrate this statement; the capacity that a community or organisation has to impose rules on its human constituents only arises from the emergent properties of the human constituents themselves (p. 21). This suggestion may be applied to the treatment of motifs and subjects in a musical sense. To take the subject of a fugue as an example, the subject itself imbues the fugue with a clearly recognisable identity, allowing the whole to take shape and emerge, however the treatment of the subject itself is constrained to a set of ‘rules’ that the whole imposes upon it as it takes shape (e.g. harmonic progresson/direction, juxtaposing (i.e. imitation and canonic activity), augmentation and diminution, idioms of treatment in each voice); there is a clear mutual link between local gesture and large-scale form with the subject and its whole simultaneously having a bottom-up/top-down effect on one another.

The following chapter of this thesis will discuss my piece in-side for quartertone flugelhorn and percussion through the lens of these findings. The second chapter documents the writing of my two pieces for string quartet Three Fantasies on a Theme by Harrison Birtwistle and Expirer (collectively entitled Funèbres), which was directly influenced by my evaluation of in-side. My concluding remarks are a reflection on my work according to the three research aims stated earlier in this introduction, closing with suggestions of future research that will develop the utilisation of fragments in my compositional methodology further.
Chapter one: every object leaves traces; absence as a device of artistic intent

This chapter focuses on two case studies where the fragment plays an integral part in both the structure and context of the music. These are Rebecca Saunders’s *Skin* (2016) and Liza Lim’s *Extinction Events and Dawn Chorus* (2017). Discussion of the Saunders will focus on how she connects local gesture to large-scale form in the work to create a sense of homogenous identity, with discussion of the Lim drawing parallels to Cornelia Parker’s ‘avoided object’ and the way in which Lim uses fragments to create a post-apocalyptic world that pays homage to her fragments’ ‘avoided’ past lives. These pieces were both influential to me during my writing of *in-side* due to attending seminars and masterclasses with both Lim and Saunders during this period. The final section of the chapter will evaluate *in-side* in relation to these two influential works, comparing and contrasting my approach to the fragment and fragmentation with that of Lim and Saunders.

**Rebecca Saunders: Skin (2016)**

Written for solo soprano vocalist and large ensemble (13 instruments), premiered by Juliet Fraser and Klangforum Wien, *Skin* marked a turning point in Saunders’s compositional style with the inclusion of a solo voice and text in the work (both entities being actively avoided/feared in Saunders’s previous output; CeReNeM seminar, 2018). One of Saunders’s main influences during the compositional process of *Skin* was Samuel Beckett’s television play *The Ghost Trio* (1976, pp. 51-66). In her programme notes to the piece, Saunders quotes the following text from Act 1 of the play, spoken by the narrator:

“...this is the room's essence
not being
now look closer

---

2 Saunders was also the featured composer of the 2019 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival where I heard many of her works performed and attended her seminar at the Centre for Research of New Music (CeReNeM), an organisation based at the University of Huddersfield. Lim has a long-standing relationship with CeReNeM; I have attended many of her guest lectures and heard many of her works performed by visiting artists in the CeReNeM concert series.
mere dust
dust is the skin of a room
history is a skin
the older it gets the more impressions are left on its surface
look again…”

The opening section of *Skin* features a duet between the solo soprano vocalist and the bass flute that weaves and intertwines variations of the same gestural fragment (see figure 5) - a sustained crescendo from nothing on a muffled pitch; the muffling effect (such as a hand over the vocalist’s mouth or the flute reed-hole turned into the mouth) is gradually removed and the pitch rises or falls by a quarter-tone (via glissandi) as the crescendo reaches its climax; the new pitch is distorted by an effect that renders it unstable (such as vibrato or flutter-tongue) and diminuendos to nothing once more. The trumpet, trombone, and bass clarinet join the texture (see figure 6) and the gesture is warped, extended, and interspersed with new material into a whirlwind of cacophony through which individual instrumental timbres are allowed to emerge and dissolve. During her 2018 CeReNeM seminar at the University of Huddersfield (in which she discussed the piece), Saunders likened this adapting of the same gesture from one instrument to another to holding a two-dimensional shape (her example being a red cross) against different coloured backgrounds. Against each background, a subtle quality of the shape is revealed that was not seen before; the two-dimensional shape is given a metaphorical third dimension. In the case of the opening gesture of *Skin*, it is coated in a ‘skin of dust’ as its impression is made over and over again by each instrument of the ensemble (nuanced by varied timbral colorings). Saunders stated that she wanted to give the audience a three-dimensional view of the gesture, exploring it from all different angles available within the timbral limits of the ensemble (her metaphor for this process was the action of walking around an object, taking photographs at various intervals, then presenting the photographs as a collage without the presence of the object itself).

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3 Saunders mentioned that this piece of text was taken from a re-working of *The Ghost Trio* which she was in the audience for and does not feature in Beckett’s original text for the play.
Figure 5: opening measures of *Skin* (bb. 1-7) exemplifying the characteristics of the opening gesture alternated between the bass flute and soprano vocalist (Saunders, p.1).

Figure 6: subsequent ensemble passage of *Skin* (bb. 8-14) in which the opening gesture is explored across a larger timbral palette (p.2).
In *Logic of Sense* (2015), Deleuze poses the ‘empty shelf’ metaphor as a criticism of the denotative qualities of language. To use the adjective ‘big’ as an example, if we try to define this word without using its synonyms (e.g. large, huge, etc.) or comparisons (e.g. not small), coming to a definition all of a sudden becomes very difficult without resorting to visual aids (i.e. non-linguistic signifiers) for help. In other words, the gap between the world and our expression of it in language is revealed; language merely coats the world in a ‘skin of dust’ which only conveys a *sense* of the ‘things’ in the world. When we try to denote anything through language, we scour all of the ‘shelves’ around it, circulating around an entire linguistic syntax for the right word, but the shelf of the ‘thing’ in question remains empty – the truly ‘right word’ is always just out of reach. In Deleuze’s own words: “Inside the series, each term has sense only by virtue of its position relative to every other term. But this relative position itself depends on the absolute position of each term relative to instance = x. The latter is determined as nonsense and circulates endlessly throughout the series” (p. 72).

Saunders commented that in *Skin*, the soprano part was written in collaboration with (and specifically for) Juliet Fraser and explores the parameters of her vocal possibilities to their full potential. All instrumental parts are derived from/complement Fraser’s timbral palette. According to Saunders, this was to create a ‘skin of dust’ for Fraser’s voice through the piece: an exoskeleton that Fraser could ‘slip into’ to render her voice ‘visible’ to the audience.

Saunders’s text is made up of fragments of her own prose and snippets from other influential texts. A key example mentioned in Saunders’s programme note is Molly Bloom’s soliloquy from Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1992, pp. 871-933). This is the eighteenth and final episode of *Ulysses* and features a stream-of-consciousness monologue of Bloom’s thoughts whilst lying in bed one morning. The structure of *Skin* is interjected with several ‘nonsense monologues’ made up of recurring fragments of text taken from Saunders’s prose and other pre-existing pieces of writing (see figure 7). These comprise of free-flowing, continuous streams of spoken word, with the final monologue (which closes the piece) ending with the utterance of “my…skin” (see figure 8). Often the vocalist is instructed to over-enunciate (as is the case in this example), or, conversely, speak with the mouth almost closed or a hand over the mouth. They are also instructed to whisper, speak whilst inhaling and exhaling, and flit between sung and spoken style through the monologues. Repeated words and phrases across the
entire text of the piece create a confused sense of familiarity – a continuous déjà vu of sorts which permeates the experience of listening. 5:4’s review of Skin in his Lent Series pin-points the immediacy of Saunders’s vocal writing, commenting that the inclusion of a vocalist and text in the piece enables a directness to the allusive/impressionistic writing idiomatic of Saunders’s previous oeuvre. He goes on to suggest that the somewhat paradoxical flitting between vague implications and explicit immediacies in both the text itself and the sonic content imbues a sense of life in the very materials of the piece, which in turn stimulates an empathetic and emotional connection between the piece and its audience (2018). It seems as though Saunders uses recurring fragments of musical gesture and literary text in Skin to create an undercurrent of familiarity through the work which simultaneously provides the piece with a clear identity; the fragments are pulverized and repeated (with each iteration being an imprint of its predecessors) to create a three-dimensional view of Fraser’s voice. In this case study, the fragment is used by Saunders as a device for creating identity; the somewhat cyclical link between local gesture and large-scale form is integral to revealing that identity to the audience.

Figure 7: closing measures of Skin (bb. 380-382) showing vocalist’s final monologue and final utterance of “my…skin” (p.88).
Figure 8: score sample from *Skin* (bb. 254-257) showing one of several ‘jumbled monologues’ situated throughout the piece. This one in particular is made up of snippets from Molly Bloom’s monologue in *Ulysses*. Here, the vocalist is instructed to over-enunciate and hold their breath whilst speaking, creating a dry, brittle, slightly strained quality to the vocal timbre. The monologue is split into two sections by a pause on the syllable ‘er’ that breaks the stream of consciousness, as if the vocalist is paused in thought.
Liza Lim: Extinction Events and Dawn Chorus (2017)

Liza Lim’s Extinction Events and Dawn Chorus, also composed for Klangforum Wien, is deeply rooted in the current global plastic trash crisis, particularly the depositing of industrial pollutants in the Earth’s oceans and the resulting detrimental effect on the eco systems of the world. It concerns themes of erosion and sedimentation, taking its source materials from Janáček’s On an Overgrown Path (1942), a faulty transcription of a recording of the last mating call ever heard of the now extinct Kauai O’o bird, and tracings of a star map that captured the Chinese southern night sky in the 9th century. These thematic materials are fragmented, crushed, and perpetually recycled into pulverised states of being; coarse conglomerates of heterogenous relics (Lim, 2017).

The opening movement of Extinction Events and Dawn Chorus – Anthropogenic Debris – introduces many melodic themes and fragments that recur throughout the piece. Figure 9 shows the exposition of the opening gesture in the trumpet and trombone; the timbral qualities of this gesture have already been distorted via microtonal inflections, glissandi, and other extended techniques. In a seminar at the University of Huddersfield, Lim stipulated that this was to, even at the outset of the work, imbue these gestures with a state of loss; they skirt the surface of the present moment, simultaneously evoking that which that were and what they may become, but being neither. They are in a state of identity crisis (CeReNeM seminar, 2018). Many of these gestures return in the second movement of the work – Retrograde Inversion – but as pulverised, recycled caricatures of their former selves. It is in this movement that Lim employs extensive ‘nested repeats’ to further fragment the melodic lines (see figure 10). In essence, they trace over themselves, internally recycling their parts in a perpetual process of simultaneous de- and re-composition. Lim commented that although it was perfectly feasible for her to have written out these ‘nested repeats’ in a much more legible way for the performer, she found this method of presentation vital to the theme of distorted information that runs through the piece – like Chinese whispers, as each melodic fragment is uttered, coded and decoded, its former self is lost and yet new subtleties are found, subtleties the performer both consciously and unconsciously finds in the deciphering process.
The final two movements of Lim’s work – *Transmission* and *Dawn Chorus* – concern a gradual shift from the stability of ‘output’ notation (i.e. exactly what will sound) to the instability of ‘input’ notation (i.e. actions of the performer that cause an unstable sonic result). For example, figure 11 shows the opening violin and snare drum duet of *Transmission*. The violinist is instructed to play freely through the notated material, inserting ‘ritualised’ points of rehearsal and tuning each time the gestures are iterated. Simultaneously, the percussionist is instructed to interpret the violinist’s notated material on the unpitched snare drum as confidently as possible, inserting points of ‘tuning’ and rehearsal of their own to complement the violinist’s activity. Not only is the material being internally ‘traced’ over itself by said ritualised rehearsal and repetition, but the performers are also ‘tracing’ over one another in a quasi-improvised dialogue of fragmented activity.

**Figure 9:** excerpt from the opening movement of *Extinction Events and Dawn Chorus* – *Anthropogenic Debris* (bb. 1-2) - indicating opening melodic gesture in the horn and trumpet lines (Lim, p. 1).

**Figure 10:** excerpt from the second movement of *Extinction Events and Dawn Chorus* – *Retrograde Inversion* (bb. 1-2) – where the opening melodic gesture is exposed once more in the horn line, this time fragmented and pulverised into a rhythmically distorted trace of itself (p. 51).
The ‘bridging the gap’ of disparate instrumental combinations is an idiom of Lim’s music highlighted in her 2016 Sounds Unheard masterclass, where she comments that the act of attempting to bring together opposing ‘worlds’ of musical activity has stimulated much thought and creativity in her own compositional practice (Sounds Unheard, 2018). In the case of Transmission, the imitative behaviour of the violin and snare-drum begins to de- and re-constitute the idiomatic qualities of the instruments themselves; the performers ‘infect’ one-another’s performance technique, challenging their epistemological capacity of knowing as performers on their instruments. This notion is at the very heart of the final two movements of Extinction Events and Dawn Chorus – they are Lim’s representation of a world that exists outside of the time-frame of the human species, formed from traces of extinct sounds and images which humanity can now only uncertainly perceive (such as the lost call of the now extinct Kauai O’o bird). Like Cornelia Parker, Lim takes pre-existing fragments, divorces them from their whole, pulverises them, and uses the raw potential energy to create a new sound world which pays homage to their ‘lost’ past lives. The fragments are positively deterritorialized, following a line of flight from their original territory only to be reterritorialized relative to the original.
Joel Kirk: *in-side (2018-19)*

*in-side*, written in 2018 for the ELISION ensemble, is a duet for quarter-tone flugelhorn and percussion (tom-toms and trash cymbal) and shares many similarities with both *Skin* and *Extinction Events and Dawn Chorus* in both its treatment of ensemble and musical material. It is similar to *Skin* in that it has a core ‘text’ which threads throughout the work, however, rather than this being a literary text, *in-side* is entirely based around the opening subject of Bach’s *Prelude and Fugue Book I, No. 2 from the Well-Tempered Clavier* (1987; see figure 12). I chose this subject in particular as it imubes all the characteristics of Cornelia Parker’s ‘monument’ – it has a clear sense of identity, it is made up of smaller recognisable parts which contribute to the overall identity of the whole, and it is monumental in the sense that it is by Bach. It was my aim in this piece to place this ‘monument’ through a process of fragmentation; I would be strip it of its identity and use its carcass to create...
something new. I placed this subject through processes of retrograde, inversion, augmentation, diminution, and pitch compression (it was also converted to un-pitched material for the percussion) to pulverise it beyond all immediate recognisability (see figure 12). Through the piece, it is iterated a total of 23 times across the two overlapping parts with each iteration being a tracing/imprint of the one which came before; recurring elements of pitch, rhythmic, gestural, and timbral figures provide glimpses of familiarity between the sections.

Similar to the violin/snare drum duet in Lim’s Transmission, the flugelhorn and percussion parts act as simultaneous pitched/un-pitched ‘tracings’ of each other, often making use of sounds that attempt to ‘bridge the gap’ between the instruments (see figure 13). Many of these sounds have fragmented qualities (e.g. split tones, trills, tremolos, flutterings, scrapings, muted murmurings, etc.) which, as they are sustained for long periods of time, allow glimpses into the unstable, inconsistent behaviours of the sounds themselves as they are produced. In his book Realist Magic: Object, Ontology, Causality (2013), Morton states “…When the audience applauds an incredible [jazz trumpet] solo, they are trying to touch the inside of a trumpet. The fact that trumpets can be manhandled in this way...to release what Harman calls their “molten core,” tells us something about objects in general. Because this never works absolutely—no solo ever exhausts the trumpet—there is that feeling that there is always more of the object than we think” (2013, pp. 22-23). In in-side, via its unrelenting sonic in-between state, the audience is granted intimate insight into the technique of the performers; the flugelhorn player at the premiere of in-side, Callum G’Froerer, went so far as to comment that the piece had a “contained” quality which was inherent in both the experiences of performing and listening (personal communication, 2019). The work is inherently a sonic exploration of the literal insides of the flugelhorn and percussion instruments, with the resultant sounds being the result of those explorations. For example, the flugelhorn player is often instructed to tape open their water-keys during the piece. The sonic result of this effect is an audible ‘airy’ quality to the sound (alongside a weakening of tone) as the air prematurely leaks from the instrument. With the water-keys open, it is also possible to hear the performer’s spit circulating through the flugelhorn before it conglomerates at the water-key, blocking the air and momentarily disrupting the sound, at which point it leaks out of the instrument.
Figure 12: author’s draft materials for the treatment of Bach’s fugue subject in Prelude and Fugue Book 1, No. 2 from the Well-Tempered Clavier. Note the simultaneous decompression of pitch and compression of tempo each time it is iterated in both parts. The flugelhorn part takes the original pitch with retrograde rhythm, and the percussion the original rhythm with intervallically inverted pitch (the pitched material was then converted to an un-pitched version of itself via the pairing of specific pitches to specific areas on each percussion instrument).
Figure 13: excerpt from *in-side* indicating the sonic ‘tracing’ between the percussion and flugelhorn (p. 1):

1. The flugelhorn tremolos on a single note with un-screwed valve-caps, which creates a metallic clicking. This emulates the percussionist trilling between the skin and rim of the medium tom-tom (also creating both a continuous ‘pitch’ of sorts and a metallic clicking).

2. The flugelhorn flutter-tongues as the dynamic increases in order to imitate the excess vibrations of the casing of the tom-tom as it is hit with greater force.

3. The flugelhorn alters the pitch up and down with the lips, imitating the percussionist’s changing of stick position (which will subtly alter the sounding ‘pitch’ of the tom-tom).

Figure 14: excerpt from *in-side* showing the aggregation of extended techniques (here, the performer employs a consistent split tone whilst playing with the water-keys open and a wa-wa mute inserted) (p. 8).
Often the flugelhorn player is instructed to play split tones with the water-keys open, where the aperture is altered so the lips vibrate at different pitches, allowing two harmonics to be heard simultaneously (microtonalprojects, 2012). Figure 14 exemplifies the aggregation of these aforementioned extended techniques, rendering it possible to hear the resultant inconsistencies of the player’s lips vibrating at different speeds simultaneously, the air passing through the instrument, water circulating the tubing system, and the naturally occurring percussive sounds of the valves being depressed. The audience thus becomes privy to the experience of playing the piece as the internal sounds of the performers and instruments become integral constituents of the external sonic result.

The programme notes for in-side consist solely of a quote from philosopher Gilbert Simondon, stating:

“The characteristic polarity of life is at the level of the membrane… the entire mass of living matter contained in the internal space is actively present to the external world at the limit of the living… To belong to interiority does not mean only to be ‘inside’, but to be on the ‘in-side’ of the limit... At the level of the polarized membrane, internal past and external future face one another” (1964, pp. 260-264; in Deleuze, 2015, p.106).

This quote denotes a third dimension to the theme of ‘insideness’ that underpins the treatment of instrumentation and thematic material in in-side, rendering inside ‘in-side’. In Logic of Sense, Deleuze discusses the concept of the “Möbius strip” (a surface with one continuous side; see figure 15), using Fortunatus’ purse in Carroll’s Sylvie and Bruno (1996) as an example. It is made of handkerchiefs ‘sewn in the wrong way,’ and thus envelops the entire world - rendering the outside of the purse inside and vice-versa (p. 11). in-side is in itself a Möbius strip of sorts; the ‘outside’ environment of the audience and performance space faces the ‘inside’ environment of the performers and instruments, with the level of the polarized membrane being the very surfaces of the instruments themselves.
In *in-side*, I have tried to use the Bach fragment as mold for imprints/tracings, with each of the 23 ‘panels’ that comprise the piece being the basis for its successor in a chain of sketches which gradually get shorter. Timbre is treated in a way that allows the instrumentalists to trace over one another in order to create a homogenous sound world that transcends them both. However, it seems as though the link between my treatment of material and the material itself is not so obvious. Although the reasoning behind choosing the Bach fugue subject due to its monumentality is clear, it seems as though the concept of this piece would still stand with any pre-existing fragment taken, or even my own composed basis. I came to this realization as a recurring question asked by my peers and tutors after presenting the piece was “why Bach *specifically*?” – a question I very much struggled to answer.

The link between local gesture and large-scale form is also rather ambiguous in *in-side*. Indeed, the local gestures and timbres are very carefully constructed involving the layering of multiple extended techniques to completely transform the sounds of the instruments to create a homogenous sonic world, however the panels of material in each instrument are deliberately offset.
from one-another. This was initially due to practical concerns – there needed to be rests in-between the panels where the performers could change sticks/mutes/pages. However, during the composition process, I realized that I could utilize these rests as a means to exploit the sense of absence/incompleteness associated with the fragment. Each successive panel of material gets gradually shorter whilst the rests in-between them stay the same length, thus the continuity of the sonic material is broken as rests in the flugelhorn and percussion parts start to coincide with each-other. As a result, the piece is punctuated with awkward silences and sags in the flow of material where only one performer is playing. The sonic result is that of an incomplete monument, as if fragments of a larger object have been placed in a roughly recognizable order, but undiscovered fragments that link them are still missing.

Moving forwards onto my string quartet *Funèbres*, I surmised the following two points to keep in mind in response to my findings from *in-side*:

1. Choose your fragments carefully. What is their significance to the piece? Are you paying homage to their past lives by using them to create something new?

2. Aim to create an integral relationship between large-scale form and local gesture so that one cannot exist without the other. The piece should be a three-dimensional entity where all gestures on all levels are connected, rather than a sectionalized stream of containers where the phrase “and then…” prevails in the unfolding of events.

It is my belief that these two points are inherently linked – by choosing fragments that have a symbolic link to what I am trying to achieve in the piece, the link between large scale form and local gesture will organically take shape.
Chapter two: evocations of the lost wanderer; Birtwistle, Wordsworth, and the death of material in *Funèbres* (2019) for string quartet

The initial concept for *Funèbres* first came to me whilst away with my family in the Lake District in the Spring of 2019. During this holiday, we visited the home of Victorian Romantic poet William Wordsworth who spent much of his life living in the area; it became the inspiration for much of the bleak, forlorn imagery in his poetry. We also walked the ‘coffin-’ or ‘corpse-route’ which runs right by Wordsworth’s house on Rydal Mount; the bodies of the dead would be carried along this route of roughly five miles from the village of Rydal to the church graveyard. Many of the natural scenes and objects of this route, such as the small lakes overgrown with reeds and ‘resting stones’ where the coffin would be laid temporarily en-route, are referred to and used as metaphors in much of Wordsworth’s poetry. His poem “Resolution and Independence” (1965, pp. 235-240) in particular paints a vivid picture of the bleak, rolling moors and imposing silhouettes of the hills in the Lake District. The poem tells a tale of Wordsworth coming across an old man – a leech gatherer – at a pond amongst the moors, a man that seemed “not alive nor dead, nor all asleep – in his extreme old age” (p. 237). In his biography of Wordsworth, Gill states that Wordsworth’s encounter with the leech gatherer was in fact a real occurrence, with Wordsworth writing “Resolution and Independence” two years later as a narrative of that encounter using the diary notes of his sister, Dorothy, which described the man’s appearance and life story in great detail (1989, p. 201). In the same passage, Gill goes on to find that Wordsworth’s depiction of the leech gatherer indicates his well-documented philosophical struggle between the outer and the inner, between material and the memory, as simultaneous discourses of creative mobilization. Perry concurs, stating “Wordsworth conjures the raw material of the actual man into haunting vision, but he…resists his idealization into Wordsworth’s mind” (2003, p. 176). The penultimate verse of the poem (shown below) exemplifies Wordsworth’s translucent imagery of the man; he is both material and memory, only to be seen out of the corner of one’s eye:

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,

The old Man’s shape, and speech - all troubled me:
In my mind’s eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed (Wordsworth, p. 240).

Considering my recent research into fragments as signifiers of prior death and thus post-apocalyptic vessels through which something new may be made, I started to envisage writing a set of pieces with the theme of exhaustive wandering as a constant – the fragments would be taken from pre-existing Funèbres from music history and be ‘exhausted’ via processes of stretching, twisting, molding, and pulverizing into oblivion. This culminated in two pieces for string quartet, *Three Fantasies on a Theme by Harrison Birtwistle* (2019) and *Expirer* (2019), under the umbrella title *Funèbres*, with the four short works paying homage to my own definition of the fragment and the Funèbre fragments that form their basis.

*Three Fantasies on a Theme by Harrison Birtwistle*

Sir Harrison Birtwistle’s *Grimethorpe Aria* (1973) was written at a time of great socio-political unrest in the United Kingdom. The ‘N minus 1’ policy of the Edward Heath government had been undermined by the nationwide miners’ strikes of 1972, which had brought the country to its knees in want of coal to fuel its power stations. Although a great success for the mining community, their unprecedented ability to ‘stranglehold’ the government put a large question mark over their future and longevity - one that was eventually realized with Margaret Thatcher’s subsequent rise to power in 1979 (Holmes, pp. 70-71). During this period of civil upheaval, the Grimethorpe Colliery

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4 The ‘N minus 1’ policy was instated in the autumn of 1970 by the Heath government to battle the issue of inflation over the 1960s, involving the reduction of public sector wage/pay claims in response to said inflation. In essence, wage increases would be treated as percentages rather than fixed values, with each wage increase being a lesser percentage of the whole than the previous (hence ‘N minus 1’). The government would stand firm in the face of industrial action, with the aim being to curb the rate of inflation via the curbing of wage increases (Holmes, 1997, pp. 56-57).
Band (an all-brass mining band in South Yorkshire), and their conductor Elgar Howarth, commissioned a work from composer Harrison Birtwistle in a bid to further the repertoire of the brass band medium (Newsome, 1992, p.21). Birtwistle worked closely Howarth, a close friend and colleague of his, through the composition of *Grimethorpe Aria* to tap into the mind-set of the goal for the piece: to respectfully compose the ‘montage of scenes’ that would ultimately capture the picture of the mining village (personal communication with Phillip McCann, 2018).\(^5\)\(^6\)\(^7\) *Grimethorpe Aria* may be considered as Birtwistle’s attempt at a ‘fragmented tone poem’ of the mining and brass band communities during the 1970s political unrest; an objective ‘collage’ of both physical and psychological images gleaned from the perspective of an outsider to those communities. Despite Birtwistle refuting any explicit socio-political connotations in his work, Cross coins the term ‘mechanical pastoral’ to describe Grimethorpe Aria; it is a sonic representation of Birtwistle’s own upbringing in the industrial Lancashire town of Accrington surrounded by the coexistence of countryside and industry, an autobiographical homage to his own sympathy and affinity for the crisis of industrial Britain in the 1970s (2000, p.7).

Since the rise of the Thatcherite government in 1979 leading to the closure of 115 mines, and the subsequent privatization of the mining industry by John Major’s government in 1994, the brass band movement has seen a large decline. The BBC’s 2010 documentary on the brass band “A Band

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5 Howarth and Birtwistle are often bracketed together in a group of five composers collectively known as ‘the Manchester school’ which comprises of: Birtwistle, Maxwell-Davies, Goehr, Howarth, and Ogdon. Howarth also directed, premiered, and recorded many works by Birtwistle during his long-standing relationship with the London Sinfonietta.

6 Farr finds the development of the brass band movement to be deeply rooted in the social class system; led by socially superior classes and industrial managers (who often set up brass bands and provided the finance for bands to obtain instruments, music, and rehearsal spaces), those of ‘lower class’ working in industrial settings could achieve some success beyond their ‘class level’ as entertainers, perpetuating the working-class culture beyond the confines of the factory (2014, pp. 8-9).

7 Phillip McCann led the 1974 BBC Proms premiere of *Grimethorpe Aria* as principal cornet of the massed Black Dyke Mills and Grimethorpe Colliery bands. He was present at many rehearsals of the piece with Howarth on the lead up to the concert (and to this day considers Howarth a lifelong friend), however never had direct contact with Birtwistle who was not in attendance at any rehearsals (personal communication, 2018).
for Britain” makes the claim that there were roughly 20,000 brass bands existing in the UK in 1979, with just 500 remaining as of 2009 (m fowkes, 2014).\(^8\) As a Yorkshireman who first discovered his interest in music through playing the flugelhorn in brass bands, I have great affinity for the community and, further, a great empathy for Birtwistle’s forlorn depiction of it in *Grimethorpe Aria.* The bleak, winding flugelhorn melody which recurs throughout the piece (see figure 16) evokes images of the lost wanderer amongst the moors; the meandering pitch patterns attempt to progress into a melodic line, each time fail, and return to the start. Venn coins the term ‘labyrinthine processional’ to describe Birtwistle’s winding melodic tendencies, stating “...the processional and the labyrinth are commonly understood as instances of the metaphor TIME PASSING IS MOTION, in which the passage of time has been spatialized” (2015, p. 207). Cross concurs with Venn when discussing *Grimethorpe Aria,* commenting that “[the] journey [of listening] is [more] complex, the line multiplies itself and moves in a number of different directions” (p. 209). Birtwistle’s labyrinthine textures and open-ended motifs endlessly seeking resolution may be considered a sonic representation of the uncertain future of the mining community and the persistent attempts of its people to be heard by a government unwilling to listen. I could not help but to make a direct link between Wordsworth’s depiction of the “weary moors” in “Resolution and Independence” and Birtwistle’s sonic realization of the mining village in his “mechanical pastoral” of *Grimethorpe Aria,* with the recurring flugelhorn motif being akin to the Wordsworth’s lost wanderer on the Cumbrian pastures. It was for this reason that I decided to take Birtwistle’s flugelhorn melody as a basis for the first of my *Funèbres* pieces (which eventually became *Three Fantasies*).

\(^8\) The BBC’s statistic may have been slightly exaggerated to gain public sympathy for the brass band movement; with the average number of personnel in a brass band being thirty, 20,000 brass bands in 1979 suggests roughly 600,000 people were playing in a brass band in the UK at this point – a questionably high statistic against a total population of 56 million at this time (ONS, 2017). In addition, the British Bandsman’s official statistic for competing UK bands in 2009 was 493; including the non-competing bands, this statistic would far surpass the 500 mark (Crookston, 2009, pp. 19-21).
Figure 16: score excerpt showing the recurring flugelhorn melody in *Grimethorpe Aria*. Melody is split into three sections; A consists of three truncated melodic segments, B a winding progressing of equal-length pitches, and C a set of repeated notes at the same pitch. The splitting of this melody into sections A, B, and C is significant to its treatment in Three Fantasies.
The first movement of the triptych, *Rallonger*, takes section A of Birtwistle’s motif, with its three ‘segments’ rendered as chords with the successive notes displaced in octaves up the ensemble (see figure 17). The texture comprises of polytempic segments of extreme polyphony interspersed with gradually lengthening ‘stopping points’ on these chords (see figure 18). Over the course of the movement, the material is gradually slowed down and stretched out until the three base chords are clearly iterated one after another at the end of the movement as (also shown in figure 17). The movement also features a gradual timbral and dynamic shift; the general structure is described below:

1. Opening homophony; 16th-notes; p dynamic; spiccatto; stopping-points one 16th-note in duration (p.1).
2. Polytempic polyphony via displacement of a 16th-note across the parts; septuplet 16th-notes; p dynamic; spiccatto; stopping points two septuplet 16th-notes in duration (p.2).
3. Polytempic polyphony; sextuplet 16th-notes; p dynamic; arco staccato; stopping points three sextuplet 16th-notes in duration (pp. 2-3).
4. Polytempic polyphony; quintuplet 16th-notes; mp dynamic; arco staccato; stopping points four quintuplet 8th-notes in duration (pp. 3-4).
5. Polytempic polyphony; 8th-notes; mp dynamic; non-staccato; stopping points five 8th-notes in duration (pp. 4-5).
6. Polytempic polyphony; triplet 8th-notes; mf dynamic; glissandi; stopping points six triplet 8th-notes in duration (pp. 5-7).
7. Polytempic polyphony; quarter-notes; f dynamic; glissandi (pp. 7-8).
8. Closing homophony; three sustained pauses on each of the primary chords that form the basis of the movement (p. 8).

The process of gradual elongation and slowing down is at the very core of what Rallonger is: a single monolithic gesture; a predictable, directional grinding to a halt. Large-scale form sits at the forefront of the movement’s identity, with the local-level decisions being subservient to the overall effect of a gradually smearing soundscape.
Figure 17: final iteration of the ‘base chords’ in Rallonger (p. 8) derived from section A of Birtwistle’s motif from Grimethorpe Aria. In each chord, the notes are displaced up the ensemble in octaves (e.g. chord 1: ‘cello takes F, viola takes G# in the next octave up, violin 2 takes B, and violin 1 the final F three octaves above the ‘cello’s bottom F).

Figure 18: score excerpt from Rallonger (p. 4) showing two segments of polytempic activity (the second slower than the first) linked by a ‘stopping point’ - these points increase in length through the piece and act as catalysts to the retarding of the polyphony.
The second fantasy, *Transfiguration*, is a literal stretching out of the entire Birtwistle motif from *Grimethorpe Aria*. Like the melody itself, it can be split into three clear segments, with each segment being based on sections A, B, and C respectively. Segment one features the gradual pitch-decompression of a thirteen-note string comprising the notes of motif A (see figure 18); in segment two, this thirteen-note string stabilizes into an ostinato pattern in the upper range of the violins, with motif B being iterated in canon between the viola and cello (see figure 19). Following a gradual move from pitched to unpitched sound in segment two, segment three is completely percussive and is comprised of layers of polytempic repeated sounds which gradually phase out in an extended morendo (somewhat derived from motif C – a succession of repeated Gs with no emphasis of pulse; see figure 21); these three segments are ‘blurred’ together at linking points to form one monolithic mass of successive transformations, underpinned by the core theme of the Birtwistle fragment.

In his programme notes for *Endless Parade* (1987) – a piece for solo trumpet and orchestra – Birtwistle anecdotes his visit to the medieval Italian town of Lucca which coincided with the annual ‘Festa’ procession of the townspeople. He states the following: “I became interested in the number of ways you could observe this event: as a bystander, watching each float pass by…or you could wander through the side alleys, hearing the parade a street away, glimpsing it at a corner, meeting head on what a moment before you saw from behind” (Birtwistle, 1987; in Adlington, 2000, p. 118). Adlington proposes that Birtwistle’s ‘sectional’ treatment of material in *Endless Parade* is akin to glancing sideways whilst in a forward motion of travel – “one momentarily loses one’s view of the direction of travel, yet one sees remains integrally related to one’s progress” (p. 119). Through the segmented structure of *Transfiguration*, the listener passes through various contrasting terrains of polyphonic activity, however the Birtwistle motif taken from *Grimethorpe Aria* permeates the entire movement, cohesively linking the sections together as a whole (most clearly so rhythmically, with the repeated thirteen-impulse pattern, grouped into two fours and a five, running right through the entire piece).
Figure 19: excerpt of violin one and two from *Transfiguration* (p. 7) showing the thirteen-note motif repeated in canon at different tempi across the ensemble in the opening section of the piece. It is gradually decompressed from a single central note (Eb) and the transposed upwards in the violins and downwards in the viola and ‘cello in quartertones.

Figure 20: excerpt from section two of *Transfiguration* showing the polytempic thirteen-note ostinato patterns in the violins atop the slower, canonic iterations of motif B (and its inverted retrograde) in the viola and ‘cello.
In Hunt’s article on the work of visual artist Tim Head, “Inside the head of the machine” (2009, pp. 28-43), he quotes the following from American abstract expressionist artist Jasper Johns:

“Make something, a kind of object, which as it changes or falls apart (dies as it were) or increases in its parts (grows as it were) offers no clue as to what its state or form or nature was at any previous time” (1964; in Hunt, p. 29).
This statement had a profound effect on my writing of the final fantasy on Birtwistle’s theme:

*Carrousel.* Somewhat simpler in its construction than *Rallonger* and *Transfiguration, Carrousel* is comprised of a single, continuous texture made up of four simultaneously occurring lines. The first of these is a central ‘basket-weaving’ of the notes F, Gb, G, A, Bb, B (the collective notes of motif A in the Birtwistle melody): a repeated cycle shared by the second violin, viola, and ‘cello at the same octave. Through this network of fibres poke intermittent pitches displaced an octave higher and lower, emphasized by louder dynamic markings (my metaphor for these being ‘dropped stitches’). Over the top of this bundle of fibres is layered a separate repeated pattern of harmonics from the Birtwistle (motif B) in the first violin which is gradually distorted across a larger and larger pitch range as the piece progresses. Distilled through the ensemble is a peppering of glissandi (most concentrated in the ‘cello line; least so in the first violin), which occasionally smears the progression of the repetitive motifs. The multiple tempi across the ensemble gradually slow down by intervals of 2bpm across the piece; this almost imperceptible slowing of material is purposeful – I wanted to give the listener a sense of the material subtly warping (the carousel ‘braking’ so to speak), but not make it explicitly apparent; the sub-surface sinking quality of the piece (i.e. the superimposing of a large-scale form) is only hinted at, and does not interfere with the perception of the local material which remains at the foreground.

Being a small segment of what is essentially an infinite process, *Carrousel* deliberately starts part-way through itself and is cut short after four minutes. The polytempic nature of the piece coupled with the excessive repetition of similar melodic lines stimulates a labyrinthine ‘floating’ effect, with small micro-gestures moving past each-other in perpetual, directionless repetition; forming and re-forming incidental macro-gestural constructs. Returning to the work of Tim Head, his *Slow Life* works were deeply influential to me whilst writing *Carrousel* (see figure 22). Although visible from afar as one monolithic entity, it is easy for the viewer to become entranced by the loops and swirls of the pen; it is one seething morass of activity that weaves the perception of the viewer into its folds as they attempt to ‘get their bearings’ with the image before them. I likened my own experience of viewing the works to looking through a ‘deconstructed kaleidoscope’ – the recognizable small fragments endlessly churn and interact, but the same larger form never occurs twice (as it would in a
kaleidoscope – the same succession of larger forms occurs over and over again). It was my intention, in *Carrousel*, to create a similar experience for the listener as mine when viewing Head’s *Slow Life* pieces; they would be rendered a lost wanderer amongst the material, with small micro-gestures acting as guides that weave their perception into the endless labyrinth of activity.
Figure 22: image of Tim Head’s *Slow Life* (web A2 No.11) (2006; in Brown, Hall, & Kyriacou, 2009, p. 23).

Drawn as one continuous line with ink on Bristol board, the work exists as one, churning, seething monolithic mass.
Written during the Spring/Summer of 2019, *Expirer* was inspired by the ‘strip paintings’ of visual artist Gehrard Richter. In these paintings (or rather, digital prints), Richter took photographs of his previously existing works and stretched out very thin slices of these paintings along wide, horizontal expanses, revealing the detailed colors and intricacies hidden within tiny slivers of the painting; intricacies previously invisible to the naked eye are rendered as vast landscapes in which the viewer is immersed (Tate, 2019; see Figure 12). It was at the same time as realizing this piece that I travelled to the Lake District and visited the ‘coffin-route’ at the house of William Wordsworth. I developed a morbid fascination with the Victorian funeral and celebration of death, with my research into this subject very much influencing my approach to *Expirer*. In his book *The Victorian Celebration of Death*, Curl finds that the Victorians had a “…delight in decay. There was something about the crumbling parish churches and ruined monasteries of the English landscape that struck an answering chord among the cognoscenti” (1972, p. 22). Morley concurs with Curl, suggest that the romanticism associated with the funeral permeated its way into everyday family life; given such high mortality rates in 19th Century Victorian England, the romanticism associated with the ballad and the

![Figure 23: image of Gehrard Richter’s Strip (921-6) which currently resides in the Tate Modern – London (Gehrard Richter, 2019). Strip (921-6) is comprised of a single slice of Richter’s previous work Abstract Painting (724-4) (1990) stretched over a large horizontal expanse, revealing the intricate striations of colour hidden within.](image)
keepsake, originally rooted in the Valentine, found its expression in the defunct object – the disused clothes, the empty crib – as a morbid signifier or remembrance (1971, p. 14). However, Jalland finds that the cult-like popularity surrounding Queen Victoria’s widowhood has contributed to a misleading view of Victorian mourning practices, stating that Victoria was in fact criticized heavily for her extreme behavior at the time, and did not embody the traditional Victorian mourner (1999, p. 232). In *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens, much admired for his realistic accounts of Victorian England, states the following:

> Wives…put on weeds for their husbands, as if, so far from grieving in the garb of sorrow, they had made up their minds to render it as becoming and attractive as possible. It was observable, too, that ladies and gentlemen who were in passions of anguish during the ceremony of interment, recovered almost as soon as they reached home, and became quite composed before the tea-drinking was over (2015, p. 73).

It may be inferred that Victorian funeral practice was in fact not so different from that of the present day – although a popular ritual of remembrance, it was not the cult-like obsession of everyday life, perpetuated by figures such as Queen Victoria, that is the popular opinion when broaching the subject of Victorian history.

*Expirer* takes a short chord progression from Variation 13 in Philip Wilby’s work for brass band *Paganini Variations* (1991) – a work that I have great fondness for given its renowned flugelhorn solo in Variation 15 (the Sospirando). Variation 13 is the Funèbre variation of this piece and is evocative of the Victorian funeral procession with its slow, stately rhythmic patterns and sinking chord progressions. These patterns extend into the following Romanza (Variation 14) and Sospirando, where they are overlaid by haunting, wistful slow melodies suggestive of the romanticism associated with Victorian funeral practice (Wilby, 2013, track 1). In *Expirer*, this fleeting chord progression from Wilby’s Funèbre is extended and repeated, continually sinking and sighing downwards from its original pitch until the ranges of the string quartet are completely exhausted.

It is undeniable that Jürg Frey’s *Streichquartette II* (1998-2000, track 5), was in my thoughts at the time of writing *Expirer*. The piece, almost 30 minutes in duration, comprises an endless sequence of very quiet minor chords bowed in a way that allows two sonorities to be (unstably)
produced on one string (ddmmyy, 2016). I could not help but draw a link between Frey’s and Wilby’s works in their fragile, tender unfolding of successive sonorities. In Frey’s own words: “[the piece] explores a space…between the fragility of individual details and an almost monumental appearance” (5:4, 2015). Somewhat akin to Wordsworth’s struggle between material and memory, Frey’s chords are translucent, ghostly imprints of themselves, neither present nor absent; they are suspended between two states of being (literally between two sonorities, and between sounding and not sounding; on the brink of life and death). In *Expirer*, it was my intent to approach Wilby’s chord progression through the lens of Frey’s treatment of sonorities. The chords progress in a stately fashion – muted, wistfully sighing – a gradual laying to rest of Wilby’s progression in *Paganini Variations*. Although similar to Frey’s *Streichquartette II* in the sense that each chord is a monumental exhalation, the chords in *Expirer* are clearly present and audible as chords, and have a clear sense of directionality downwards; they are a poetic (yet insipid) evocation of the funeral procession trudging away until it is visible no more; a homage to the Victorian funeral procession and the coffin route which inspired the piece.
Concluding remarks

Analysing the role of the fragment/fragmentation in my compositional output has allowed me to primarily address issues of context in my work, leading to a stylistic maturing and a new-found hesitancy before putting pen to paper. I now conduct far more prior research into the subject matter of my pieces before writing them and spend much time drafting material before writing a finalised form. Researching the fragment has also allowed me to consider and start to address the dichotomy of local gesture vs. large-scale form. I have found that form is not a sense of directionality that is imposed upon subsidiary materials (as was the case in my early works), but something that is synergised by the mutual relationship between materials on all levels. Moving forwards, I have been conducting preliminary research into artworks and algorithmic theories that may assist me in achieving this relationship:

Figure 24 shows an image of Man Ray’s work *Obstruction* (1961; the MET, 2019). Comprised of 63 wooden coat hangers, *Obstruction* is an assemblage of overlapping forms becoming more complex as the hangars divide and multiply. To return to DeLanda’s notion that wholes emerge in binary a top-down/bottom-up fashion, it is clear that any disturbance to any one hanger in *Obstruction* has a knock-on effect to the position of all other hangers, and thus the overall shape of the entanglement. There is a beautifully simplistic link between the local and the large scale; they are essential to one another.

![Figure 24: image of Man Ray’s *Obstruction* (the MET, 2019).](image-url)
I have also recently become interested in Fourier transforms. These are mobile mechanisms consisting of epicycles (circles moving within circles) which can be used to draw larger visual forms as they move around each-other at different speeds (Swanson, 2019; see figure 25). The multiple layers of simultaneously moving mechanisms are thoroughly interdependent on one another in a Fourier transform and, like the coat hangers in Man Ray’s Obstruction, are interconnected in a top-down/bottom-up arborescence. This produces a larger form which is dependent on the state of being of each constituent piece. It struck me that, given the polytempic and mechanistic nature of my work, the application of Fourier transform theory may assist me in being able to link the local-level mechanism with large-scale form, and is the next step for me in tackling this issue with my work.

Figure 25: image of a Fourier transform in action; the network of mobile circles is drawing the image of a hand holding a pencil (Swanson).
References

CeReNeM seminar with Liza Lim. (2018). University of Huddersfield: CeReNeM

CeReNeM seminar with Rebecca Saunders. (2018). University of Huddersfield: CeReNeM

Personal communication with Phillip McCann (2018). University of Huddersfield

Personal communication with Callum G’Froerer. (2019). University of Huddersfield: CeReNeM


in-side

Quarter-tone Flugelhorn and Percussion

Joel Kirk (2018)

c. 10-11 minutes
Programme note:
“The characteristic polarity of life is at the level of the membrane…the entire mass of living matter contained in the internal space is actively present to the external world at the limit of the living…To belong to interiority does not mean only to be ‘inside’, but to be on the ‘in-side’ of the limit...At the level of the polarised membrane, internal past and external future face one another”

- Gilbert Simondon

Notations:

**Flugelhorn**
- Denis Wick cup mute
- Metal straight mute
- Wooden straight mute
- Practice mute

- acolian/air noise (unpitched)
- weak/airy tone

- split tone (between harmonics indicated; if more than two harmonics are indicated, allow indeterminate, unstable flickering between them)
- if ‘x’ - split tone with indeterminate upper harmonic

- transition from ordinary sound to flutter-tongue
- flutter-tongue
- growl
- breath-articulate note (no tongue/front to the note)

**Percussion**

- Splash cymbal
- High tom - c.12” (coated head)
- Medium tom - c.14” (coated head)
- Low tom - c.16” (coated head)
- Mounted block of polystyrene
- 1x medium-soft yarn stick (rattan handle)
- 2x hard yarn sticks
- 1x drum stick
- 1x brushes
- 1x superball
- 1x serrated metal stick (e.g. long nail)
- 1x metallic wire brush
- 1x sand-paper covered rod (or similar)
- 1x horse-hair bow
- finger percussion
- 1x coin/metallic disc

- changing position of stick (usually where the stick is hitting the rim of the tom; in this case, tip - middle - tip)
- changing placement of stick on drum (in this case, centre - edge - centre)
Performance set-up:

1. Input click-tracks into Logic/Reaper/Ableton, etc.
2. Route click-tracks to separate interface outputs (i.e. flugelhorn = output 1, percussion = output 2)
3. Connect headphones for each performer to their respective output
4. When 'play' is selected on the program, each performer should receive their own separate click track simultaneously

**NB**. Clicks are as accurate as possible considering the ‘irrationality’ of the tempi. Performers may wish to use the clicks for rehearsal purposes only.

**AUDIENCE SPACE**
...To belong to interiority does not mean only to ‘be inside’, but to be on the ‘in-side’ of the limit...
At the level of the polarized membrane, internal past and external future face one another..." - Gilbert Simondon

* click will give rhythm indicated in brackets as an indication of tempo prior to entry. Click will ALWAYS return to speed of 1/16th notes in the tempo shown upon its enaction

[Gradually move down the shaft of the drum stick on the rim of the tom-tom (to roughly halfway), then gradually return to the tip]
* there will be no click in pause sections. Click will re-enter to give up-beat to next section as shown in grey

** simultaneously sliding superball and brushes around the surface of the tom-tom specified

---

set aside cup mute
insert metal straight mute

---

[N.B. dynamics in quotation marks are paranthetical - the performer should attempt to achieve/convey the dynamic shown, even if the sounding result is not accurate]

---

*** very unstable flickering between harmonics

---

[sliding superball around surface of tom-tom whilst simultaneously bouncing handle of brushes on the tom-tom rim]
4.

set aside wooden straight mute
insert wa-wa mute

8.66 seconds

7.33 seconds

[simultaneously sliding brushes around the tom-tom
surface and scraping serrated metal rod across the rim]
taped open 1st and 3rd valve water keys
extend 1st and 2nd valve tuning slides (to noticeably
flatten notes played on these valves)

** breath articulate notes with dash through (no tongue/front to the note)

* vibrato (fast/narrow; shimmering)

7.33 seconds

8.66 seconds

[scraping sand-paper rod (or similar) across rim of
tom-tom; metal wire brush on surface]
(\text{vibrato (simile)}) (0)
(\text{vibrato (simile)}) (0)
(\text{vibrato (simile)}) (0)
(\text{vibrato (simile)}) (0)
(\text{vibrato (simile)}) (1-3)
(\text{vibrato (simile)}) (0)

\text{mp} \text{mp} \text{mp} \text{mp}

\text{8.66 seconds}

\text{close 1st-valve tuning slide}
\text{loosen wa-wa mute}
\text{(water keys remain taped open)}

\text{\( J = 36.9230769 \)}

\text{when striking the rim of the tom-tom}
\text{with the yarn stick, strike with the wood}
\text{of the stick just below the yarn head}

\text{[ad lib.]}
set down wa-wa mute
pick up practice mute
(water keys remain taped open)
8.66 seconds

[ad lib. (simile)]

splash cymbal should ALWAYS be dampened

7.33 seconds

= 42.2727273

= 44.3076922

= 42.3076923
8. tape open main water key (1st and 3rd valve water keys remain taped open)
* indeterminately moving practice mute away from and back into bell of flugelhorn (quickly)

** half-valve improvised gliss (maintaining split tone effect); performer may use contours indicated as a guide, but this is not necessary

insert practice mute securely

[scraping coin across splash-cymbal surface]

[improvised half-valve gliss. grace-notes; maintain split-tone timbre throughout; breath-accent notes in black according to click track in the midst of improvisatory chaos]

one breath (if possible; if not, do not breathe until percussionist has started playing)

[improvisatory chaos across all instruments with materials indicated]

9.733 seconds

8.66 seconds

7.33 seconds
Chaos. as raucous as possible; improvisation may make use of any mutes/sticks/objects/extended techniques previously included in the piece, however must be continuous, and contain no sustained (longer than 1 second) or pure tones (untainted by disruptive, unstable qualities).

unscrew valve tops (i.e. valves click when depressed)
(water keys remain taped open)

four clicks at 60bpm, then click will cease

etc. al fine

ff

split tone around range shown (moving downwards through the range of the instrument gradually);
valves must be moving continually;
tongue/flutter-tongue/growl/use mutes ad lib.

c. 10 seconds

etc. al fine

c. 15 seconds

tightening valve-tops one by one...

gradual transition to aeolian sounds;
valves still moving continually;
tongue/flutter-tongue/growl/use mutes ad lib.

etc. al fine

ff

scrapings/squeakings/bangs/crashes;
use all sticks/instruments/materials ad lib.

gradual transition to light finger percussion/hushed scraping sounds;
use all sticks/instruments/materials ad lib.

freeze

Joel Kirk (12/11/18)
Three Fantasies on a Theme by Harrison Birtwistle

String Quartet  
Joel Kirk (2019)

I: Rallonger
II: Transfiguration
III: Carrousel

c. 12-13 minutes
Programme Note:

Written during the Spring/Summer of 2019, this triptych of pieces was inspired by the ‘strip paintings’ of Gerhard Richter. In these paintings, Richter took photographs of his previously existing works and stretched out very thin slices of these paintings along wide, horizontal expanses, revealing the detailed colours and intricacies hidden within tiny slivers of the painting; intricacies previously invisible to the naked eye are rendered vast landscapes in which the viewer is immersed. This piece takes the flugelhorn motif from Harrison Birtwistle’s work for brass ensemble *Grimethorpe Aria* (1973) and, via processes of repetition and pulverisation, stretches it out into three contrasting landscapes of roughly equal length.

Birtwistle’s *Grimethorpe Aria* was written at a time of great socio-political unrest in the United Kingdom. The ‘N minus 1’ policy of the Edward Heath government had been undermined by the nationwide miners’ strikes of 1972, which had brought the country to its knees in want of coal to fuel its power stations. Although a great success for the mining community, their unprecedented ability to ‘stranglehold’ the government put a large question mark over their future and longevity - one that was eventually realized with Margaret Thatcher’s subsequent rise to power in 1979. *Grimethorpe Aria*, with its bleak, forlorn character, may be considered Birtwistle’s attempt at a fragmented tone poem of the mining and brass band communities during the 1970s political unrest; an objective ‘collage’ of both physical and psychological images gleaned from the perspective of an outsider to those communities.

William Wordsworth’s poem “Resolution and Independence” paints a vivid picture of the bleak, rolling moors and imposing silhouettes of the hills in the Lake District. The poem tells a tale of Wordsworth coming across an old man – a leech gatherer – at a pond amongst the moors, a man that seemed “not alive nor dead, nor all asleep – in his extreme old age”. Wordsworth’s depiction of the leech gatherer indicates his well-documented philosophical struggle between the outer and the inner, between material and the memory, as simultaneous discourses of creative mobilization. The penultimate verse of the poem (shown below) exemplifies Wordsworth’s translucent imagery of the man; he is both material and memory, only to be seen out of the corner of one’s eye. I could not help but to make a direct link between Wordsworth’s depiction of the “weary moors” in “Resolution and Independence” and Birtwistle’s sonic realization of the mining village in his ‘mechanical pastoral’ of *Grimethorpe Aria*, with the recurring flugelhorn motif being akin to the Wordsworth’s lost wanderer on the Cumbrian pastures. It was for this reason that I decided to take Birtwistle’s flugelhorn melody as the key motif for this set of works, with its stretching out being akin to the endless wandering of the translucent, lonely figure.

**Flugelhorn**

```plaintext
While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape, and speech - all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed

- *William Wordsworth* - “Resolution and Independence”
```

**Performance Directions:**

- **bow tremolo**
- **high bow-pressure**
- **quarter-tone flat**
- **scrape fingernail up/down indicated string**
  
  (up = towards bridge, down = towards fingerboard)
- **quarter-tone sharp**
- **tap wood of instrument with fingertip (back or shoulder)**
- **low LH finger pressure (allow indeterminate harmonics to occur)**
- **play directly on the bridge (unpitched sound)**
Each movement of this piece requires a separate click-track for each performer. The following set-up should be used to ensure all click-tracks start simultaneously for each movement.

1. Input click-tracks into Logic/Reaper/Ableton, etc.
2. Route click-tracks to separate interface outputs (i.e. Violin 1 = output 1, Violin 2 = output 2, etc.).
3. Connect headphones for each performer to their respective output.
4. When ‘play’ is selected on the program, each performer should receive their own separate click track simultaneously.
I. Rallonger

* YOU WILL EACH RECEIVE FOUR INTRODUCTORY CLICKS AT THE SPEED OF THE OPENING TEMPO (HALF-NOTE = 50). RED STEMS INDICATE IMPULSES GIVEN BY CLICKS.

Allegretto \( \frac{\text{d}}{\text{b}} = 50 \)

* Violin 1

* Violin 2

* Viola

* Violoncello

---

\( \text{agitato} \)

\( \text{spiccato} \)

\( \text{not 1st time} \)

\( \text{play 5x} \)

\( \text{repeat 5x} \)

---

Joel Kirk (2019)
Joel Kirk (06/19)
II. Transfiguration

Joel Kirk (2019)
c. 4-5 minutes

* YOU WILL EACH RECEIVE FOUR INTRODUCTORY CLICKS AT THE SPEED OF YOUR OPENING TEMPO. CLICK GIVES CONSISTENT QUARTER-NOTE SPEED THROUGHOUT.

* Violin 1  
= 80
sempre vibrato
pp

* Violin 2  
= 70
sempre vibrato
pp

* Viola  
= 60
sempre vibrato
pp

* Violoncello  
= 50
sempre vibrato
pp
* CLICK WILL GIVE SPEED OF UNDERLYING TEMPO (SHOWN BY GREY LINES)
sempre col legno; low LH finger-pressure (allow indeterminate harmonics to occur)
high bow pressure; slow bowing speed (very interrupted, unstable sound)
scrape fingernail up/down indicated string

“mp” attempt to equal volume of 2nd violin percussive tapping

tap wood of instrument with fingertip (back or shoulder)

“mp” attempt to equal volume of 1st violin scraping
D

\[ \text{\textbf{mp }} \text{attempt to create a homogenous, mp, ensemble dynamic} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{mp }} \text{attempt to create a homogenous, mp, ensemble dynamic} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{mp }} \text{attempt to create a homogenous, mp, ensemble dynamic} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{mp }} \text{play directly on the bridge (unpitched sound)} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{mp }} \text{attempt to create a homogenous, mp, ensemble dynamic} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{mp }} \text{tap-trill with fingertip on wood of instrument (back or shoulder)} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{mp }} \text{attempt to create a homogenous, mp, ensemble dynamic} \]
c. 10-15 seconds

Joel Kirk (07/19)
III. Carrousel

* YOU WILL EACH RECEIVE FOUR INTRODUCTORY CLICKS AT THE SPEED OF YOUR OPENING TEMPO. CLICK GIVES CONSISTENT QUARTER-NOTE SPEED THROUGHOUT.

c. 4 minutes

Joel Kirk (2019)

= 74

* Violin 1
(open)

= 68

* Violin 2
sempre con sord.

= 62

* Viola
sempre con sord.

= 56

* Violoncello
sempre con sord.

1.
gliss. as far as possible
Expirer

String Quartet  Joel Kirk (2019)

c. 4-5 minutes

Written during the Spring/Summer of 2019, Expirer was inspired by the ‘strip paintings’ of Gerhard Richter. In these paintings, Richter took photographs of his previously existing works and stretched out very thin slices of these paintings along wide, horizontal expanses, revealing the detailed colours and intricacies hidden within tiny slivers of the painting; intricacies previously invisible to the naked eye are rendered vast landscapes in which the viewer is immersed. This piece takes a short chord progression from Variation 13 in Philip Wilby’s work for brass ensemble Paganini Variations (1991). Variation 13 is the Funèbre variation of this piece, and is evocative of the funeral procession with its slow, trudging rhythmic patterns and haunting slow melodies. In Expirer, this fleeting chord progression is extended and repeated, continually sinking and sighing downwards until the ranges of the instruments are exhausted and the material itself is all but spent.
Expirer
Joel Kirk (2019)

Grave  \( \frac{3}{4} = 160 \)
slowly sighing; expiring

Violin 1

\( \text{flautando} \)
sempre con sord.
pp

Violin 2

\( \text{flautando} \)
sempre con sord.
pp

Viola

\( \text{flautando} \)
sempre con sord.
pp

Violoncello

\( \text{flautando} \)
sempre con sord.
pp \( \simile \)